

# Bed Bugs: Know the Facts



## What are bed bugs?

The common bed bug (*Cimex lectularius*) is an insect that feeds on human blood. They are often found near sleeping areas in the seams of mattresses, box springs, cracks and crevices in bed frames, and usually spread to gaps behind baseboards, pictures, wallpaper and electrical outlets. They may hitchhike into a home on used furniture, clothing or other items brought from infested areas.



## What do they look like?

Adult bed bugs are reddish-brown, wingless insects about the size of an apple seed (1/4 – 3/8 -inch long). When viewed from the side, they are flat, which is why they can fit into such narrow spaces. Newly hatched bugs are white or yellowish and resemble the adults, but are smaller. Bed bug eggs are white, about the size of a pinhead (1/10 -inch long) and are found in crevices in clusters of 10-50 eggs.



## Can bed bugs cause disease?

Bed bugs are not known to transmit disease. Their bites are painless and typically happen at night while you sleep. Bed bugs feed for about three to 10 minutes before crawling off to a sheltered crevice. They will bite anywhere on the body, but especially on exposed areas such as the face, neck, arms and hands.

Some people are hardly aware they have been bitten, but others suffer an allergic reaction and may develop painful swellings similar to those associated with mosquito or flea bites. The bites may itch for up to two weeks before healing, so resist the urge to scratch to prevent a secondary, bacterial infection. Wash the bites with soap and water to reduce the risk of infection.

## How can I prevent a bed bug infestation in my home?

Do not bring infested items into your home. It is important to inspect new and used furniture before bringing it inside by examining tight spaces along seams, around buttons and under cushions. When traveling, look for evidence of bed bugs, such as fecal spots on mattresses, before unpacking.

